



CAES scientists and engineers presented their research capabilities to more than 50 people from industry and the CAES partner institutions at the CAES-sponsored Idaho Research Symposium last month.

Center for Advanced Energy Studies strengthens industry collaborations

By [Kortny Rolston](#), *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

Before attending the Idaho Research Symposium, Joe Bowen polled his [M2M Communications](#) co-workers about the [Center for Advanced Energy Studies](#) and its research collaborations.

Few — including Bowen — knew how CAES, a research partnership between [Boise State University](#), [Idaho National Laboratory](#), [Idaho State University](#) and [University of Idaho](#), might benefit a private company like M2M Communications, which develops sensors to control and monitor electrical energy consumption. (M2M recently sold to [EnerNOC](#) for \$33.3 million.)

By the time the symposium ended, that was no longer the case.

"I feel like I have a much better understanding of what CAES is and the research capabilities of its partners," said Bowen, M2M's chief technology officer. "I have some ideas on how we might be able to work together."

That is the response CAES was hoping for when it organized the Idaho Research Symposium.

"We wanted to plant some seeds for research collaboration with industry and to understand what the private sector needs from Idaho's researchers," said CAES Director Harold Blackman.



Ray Furstenau, DOE-ID deputy manager, explained his agency's push to develop "innovation ecosystems" that move government-developed technologies into the marketplace faster.



Dr. Robert Podgorney from INL's Renewable Energy Technology Department briefs symposium participants on the [geothermal energy research](#) and development occurring at CAES and its partner institutions.

They also agreed that forging partnerships is a critical step to speeding the transfer of technology from public institutions to entrepreneurs.

The Idaho Research Symposium, they said, represented a good first step.

"Having discussions like this will help us bridge the valley of death that exists between a technology being developed at a university or lab and getting it to market," said Pamela Crowell, Idaho State University's vice president of research.

Ray Furstenau, deputy manager of the U.S. Department of Energy's Idaho Operations Office, applauded CAES for organizing the symposium and explained his agency's push to develop "innovation ecosystems" that move government-developed technologies into the marketplace faster.

More than 50 people from industry and the CAES partner institutions attended the symposium, which was held last month in Idaho Falls.

During the event, CAES scientists and engineers described the research capabilities of their respective institutions in geothermal, energy efficiency, nuclear energy and bioenergy and discussed potential areas of private-sector collaboration.

Industry representatives discussed how such work might benefit them and also how relationships with Idaho's research community would enhance their competitiveness.

One key issue that emerged is the different timeframes in which academic researchers and private industry work.

"We don't have time to wait for a proposal to be submitted or to write a grant. If we do, we'll lose business," said Doug Sayer, president of [Premier Technology](#), a Blackfoot-based manufacturer.

However, both industry representatives and the CAES partners vowed to overcome this difference.



These ecosystems, he said, will help ensure the United States stays at the forefront of energy innovation and research. "We're starting our own innovation ecosystem with this function today," he said.

Dr. Akira Tokuhiro, a CAES researcher from University of Idaho, discussed the ongoing nuclear energy research at the center.

Bowen agreed. "Now we know what kind of research capability is out there," he said.

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